

100 YEARS



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of the **BROOKLYN A.I.C.P.**

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HOUSE FOR THE BLIND

100 YEARS AGO



SETH LOW

called a mass meeting of citizens to discuss ways and means of improving the condition of Brooklyn's unfortunate poor. As a result the Brooklyn A.I.C.P. came into being with Mr. Low as its founder and first president.

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1892
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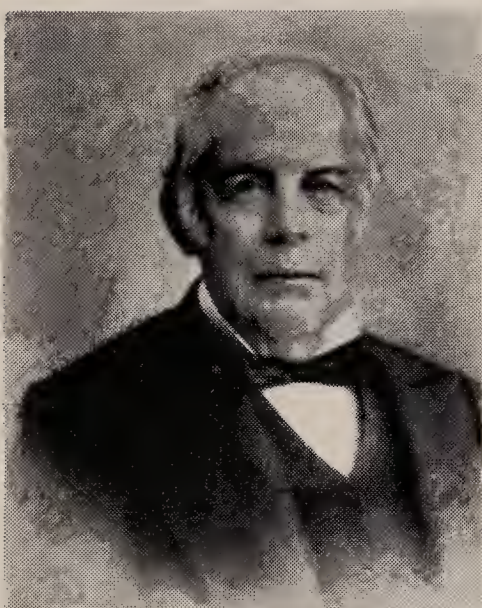
A CENTURY
of A. I. C. P.
PRESIDENTS



SETH LOW



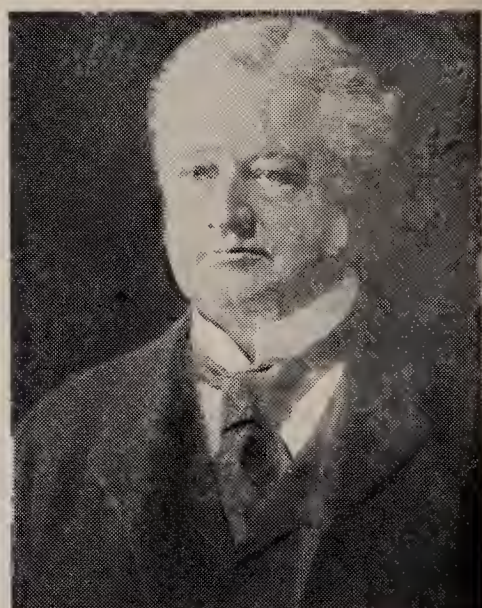
ADAM D. WHEELOCK



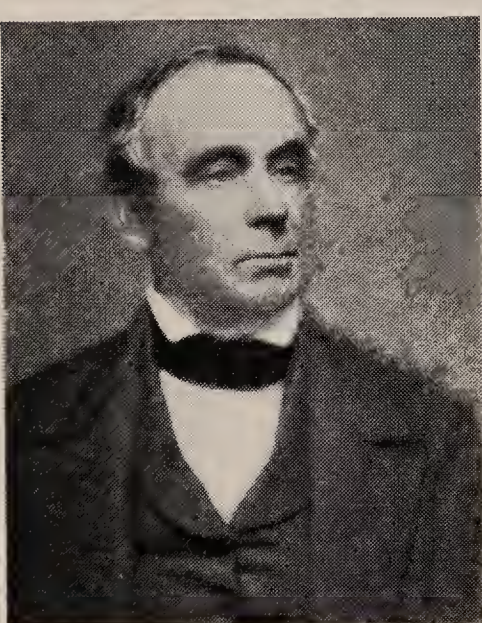
STEPHEN CROWELL



MARCUS C. HANKINSON



ABBOT A. LOW



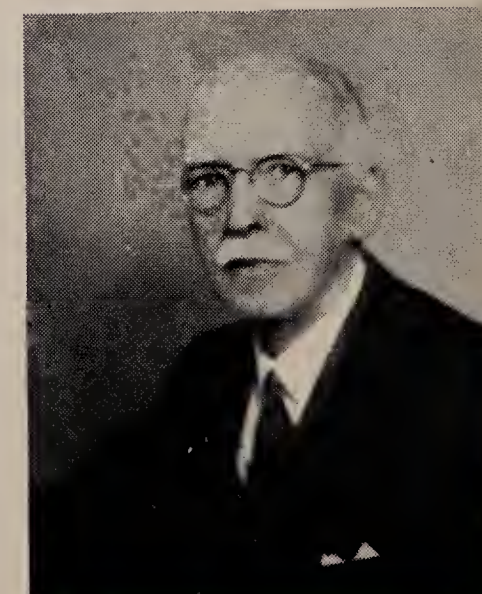
GEORGE HALL



ERNEST H. PILSBURY



REUBEN W. ROPES



GEORGE W. GIDDINGS

- SETH LOW
1843-1853
STEPHEN CROWELL
1854-1857
GEORGE HALL
1857-1863
REUBEN W. ROPES
1863-1890
ADAM D. WHEELOCK
1890-1897
ABBOT A. LOW
1898-1912
ERNEST H. PILSBURY
1913-1923
GEORGE W. GIDDINGS
1923-1925
MARCUS C. HANKINSON
1925 —

IN THE BEGINNING

One hundred years ago a group of able Brooklyn citizens met together under the leadership of the stalwart humanitarian, Seth Low, to register their discontent with the manner in which the poor people of the community were being treated and their very real needs neglected.

Not long before this time, flogging and the tread mill had been the penalty for being poor in the little city of 35,000 people. No sewage system existed, no gas street lighting, no public water supply. The treatment of the poor was as primitive as its community life. But it was beginning to be realized that better methods must be devised for human reclamation than the poor house and punishment.

Out of this first citizen's meeting quickly grew a determination that relief for the neglected must be put on a more permanent and systematic basis. And this led directly to the founding in 1843 of the Brooklyn Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor — a long title to be sure, but it meant something constructive then and it means the same thing today.

In his first address to the citizens of Brooklyn, as president of the A.I.C.P., Seth Low said, "There are few persons, if any, so destitute of the common sympathies of our nature as to be unwilling to assist the unfortunate."

The Association's early days were strenuous ones. The year after its founding the little city was rocked by terrifying riots which were put down only by military force. Ship fever ravaged the town during 1847-48 and was followed closely by the terrors of a cholera epidemic. A year later occurred the "Great Brooklyn Fire" in which the business section of the city was practically destroyed and hundreds of homeless people were in dire distress. The Association records mention, "the honorable fact that our generous community, notwithstanding the heavy

CHOLERA, FIRE
IN EARLY DAYS

calls (to the amount of \$5,718) . . . caused by the awful conflagration of 1848 did cheerfully and abundantly contribute to the funds of our Association."

During this early period the increasing flood of immigration formed a perplexing problem. Nearly 300,000 a year were landing in New York and thousands of them crossed the East River to swell the ranks of Brooklyn's destitute and needy and add to the strain on the Association's slender resources.

RELIEF COSTS INCREASE

Due to this influx the cost of relief afforded by the Association first passed the \$10,000 mark in 1854. This contribution was largely influenced by an appeal made by Brooklyn's Mayor, George Hall, in behalf of the Association.

In 1857 occurred the first major financial panic with which this Association had had to contend, with a resultant army of 10,000 unemployed in Brooklyn. Under the strain of that depression the A.I.C.P. expended \$12,885 for relief in 1857.

Just before the Civil War, the long-considered policy of providing employment whenever possible as a method of relief was adopted by the Association, and since that time it has been the constant objective of the organization. The year 1861 brought its war problems of unemployment and lowered wages. Nevertheless, Brooklyn voluntarily increased its contributions to the A.I.C.P. by one-third.

Intense activity marked the period of the Civil War and its aftermath when the widows and orphans of the war were clamoring for help. It is recorded that during that war the fuel provided for the poor was supplemented by chips from the Navy Yard given by the then Commandant.

FIRST SEWING ROOM OPENS

But always the principle of providing work with wages has been stressed. Thus, in 1868, the first A.I.C.P. sewing room was opened at 162 Joralemon Street, giving employment to numbers of needy women.



THESE BUSY PILLOW CASE TRIMMERS ARE DOING THEIR BIT FOR OUR SOLDIERS' COMFORT.

CRUTCHES ARE LAID ASIDE WHILE THESE GIRLS WORK FOR VICTORY.



THROUGH THE YEARS

Though its roots were planted early in Brooklyn, the Association has been often transplanted. From its first headquarters in the old Henry Street Armory it was moved in turn during its first thirty years to the Brooklyn Institute, thence to the City Hall, where it established a distributing depot for clothing.

A.I.C.P. BUYS FIRST HOME

In 1873 the Association first occupied quarters of its own, this having been made possible by the first considerable legacy to the A.I.C.P. — \$5,000 by Francis D. Mason. The plot of land and small frame house at 108 Livingston Street, formerly the Joralemon Homestead, was secured and headquarters established. Two distribution offices for food, fuel and clothing were opened, but ten years later it became necessary to have a larger building with adequate facilities for handling the increasing requirements of charitable work.

For that purpose, thirty thousand dollars were contributed by the citizens of Brooklyn, which resulted in the erection of a new building at 104 Livingston Street while additional funds provided for the employment of the first trained investigators to take up the work grown too complex for the volunteer visitors. From this location the Association's work was directed until, in 1926, it was re-located at 401 State Street, its present headquarters, from which its family welfare work continued along the same but expanding lines that had been its program for many years.

BLIND WORK IS STARTED

In 1912 however a legacy of over \$400,000 from the estate of William Fox was the lever that set in motion the activity which today engages the entire resources of the agency; the training, care, and guidance of the blind and those otherwise handicapped. From the small beginning of that year, 1912, with its limited facilities, the growth of the idea was steady and sure. Accompanying it was a general awakening to the need of greater skills and facilities in unfolding and using the latent ability of handicapped people. And thus to develop self-supporting, independent citizens.



PERHAPS THE MOPS THESE BLIND MEN ARE MAKING WILL HELP WIPE OUT THE AXIS.

EVERY ONE OF THE PACKING ROOM WORKERS IS A HANDICAPPED MAN.



TODAY – AND TOMORROW

During the two decades following the start of the A.I.C.P. Sheltered Workshop and Training School the agency pursued its normal course in other fields, but with the beginning of the depression of the 1930's the entry of Federal, State and Municipal agencies into the field of family relief lifted that burden largely from the overloaded shoulders of the Association. It was possible then to think of giving more intensive effort to the problems of the blind, the crippled, the disabled, those whose needs were far deeper than those of the normal person.

CHANGE IN A.I.C.P. POLICY

So in 1938 a radical change took place in the A.I.C.P. program. From that year on the resources and strength of the agency have been applied solely to upbuilding and care of the handicapped. This change in policy was made not without some misgivings but its wisdom has been amply proved by the results. Brooklyn is now proud of the fact that it possesses and supports one of the brightest torches in the country lighting the path of blind and otherwise afflicted people.

Three hundred handicapped are now earning over \$300,000 a year in their newly equipped building on Adams Street. They are free from the humiliation of want and distress and they have the assurance that the Association stands ready with a helpful hand for them and their families whenever and wherever needed. A particular pride is theirs in knowing that they are at the present time standing on an equal patriotic footing with all able-bodied people in their contribution to the war effort so necessary to our freedom.

The hundredth year of the Brooklyn A.I.C.P. is the full year of its history, and the century-old Association here records its sense of deep obligation to all those who have helped to make that century notable and who offer their warm encouragement at the beginning of the next.



COLOR IN INTRICATE PATTERNS TAKES FORM UNDER THIS BLIND MAN'S SKILLFUL FINGERS.

BLIND MEN BOWLING? SURELY; AND THEY MAKE GOOD SCORES, TOO.



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BROOKLYN A.I.C.P.

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